

SUCCESS STORY ***Portland District Office***

Wallet Guy Finds a Better Tape



Shoppers at Portland Saturday Market have known him for years as the Duct-Tape Wallet Guy. But Garrett Croft Stenson (left) is moving on – to gaffer's tape. Seven years after he made his first duct-tape wallet at college in Idaho, Stenson has closed the doors on Ductbills. In its place he has launched several new lines of gaffer's tape wallets that he calls pocket art. "One thing I want people to know is I'm still in the game," says Stenson, 26, whose new company is called db clay.

About a year ago, Stenson discovered gaffer's tape, which is used by lighting and sound technicians on stages and movie sets. Stenson compares it to space-age materials. At present, db clay offers five series of wallets, ranging in price from \$40 to \$85. Camera series: With images captured by Portland photographers, the wallets feature scenes such as a cloud-lined Central Oregon horizon. Sketchbook series: The wallets display sketchbook drawings by Portland artists. Limited series: db clay hand-screens the designs with custom-mixed acrylics. Material series: The wallets' designs are based on recycled and found materials, inspired in particular by a linoleum floor design spotted in the former Dammasch State Hospital. Plain series: The wallets are plain, but can be decorated by their owners.

With the help of a U.S. Small Business Administration loan, Stenson now has four full-time employees, a manufacturing contract with a factory in Vietnam, a pending patent on db clay's designs, and accounts with about three dozen retailers worldwide, including four in Portland. Stenson intends to expand the product lines to include items ranging from clutches to luggage.

Apart from db clay, Stenson is even branching out into fashion design by investing in Sameunderneath, the Portland company for which his sister designs clothing made of yet another unusual material: bamboo.